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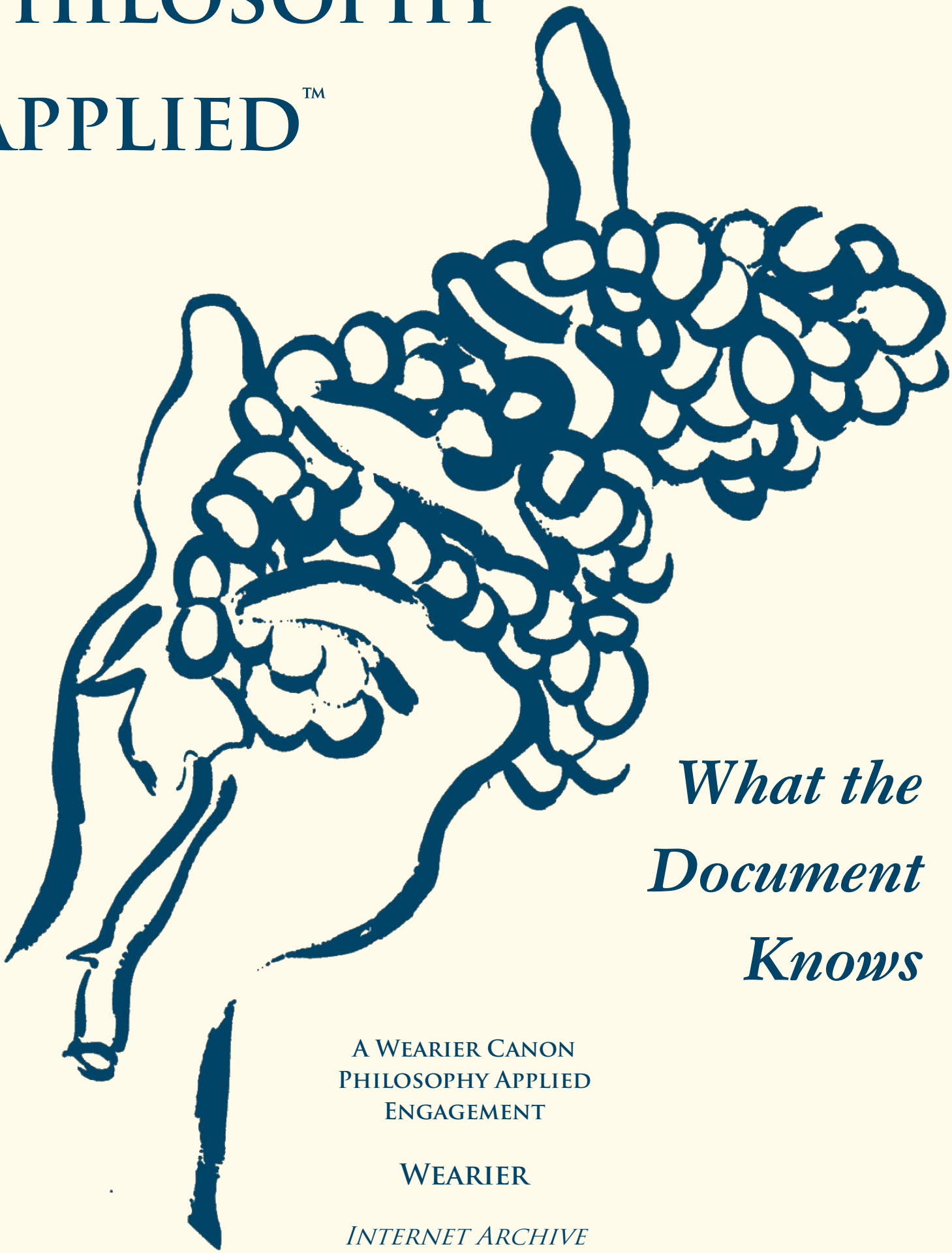

What the Document Knows

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WHAT THE DOCUMENT KNOWS

An Examination of "Built to Benefit Everyone"
by Sam Altman and Jakub Pachocki

Philosophy Applied™ Wearier Canon Engagement — June 09, 2026

I. The Document

"Built to Benefit Everyone" is a public statement by Sam Altman and Jakub Pachocki, released by OpenAI on June 8, 2026. It is not a technical document or product announcement. It is a strategic framework — part mission statement, part corporate positioning — released as OpenAI prepared for its initial public offering. That context is not incidental. A document released at the threshold of an IPO is simultaneously a statement of values and an instrument of institutional self-presentation. Both functions are present throughout, and the Canon's framework examines both.

The document is read here through two lenses: the dual modality framework developed in **EBI ~ AI: The Dual Modality of Digital Thought**, and the thermodynamic framework of *Pragmatic Thermodynamics* as developed throughout the **Wearier Canon** philosophical opus. Neither lens is applied to discredit the document. Both are applied to locate what it actually claims, where those claims hold, and where the framework identifies tensions the document cannot resolve from within its own position.

II. Two Registers, One Document

The dual modality framework observes that the same system operates on different registers depending on the nature of the inquiry put to it. AI names the functional register — what the system performs. EBI (*Extra-Biological Intelligence*) names the ontological register — what kind of thing it is, and what that means.

The Altman-Pachocki document operates on both registers simultaneously without distinguishing between them.

Its AI mode claims are the three stated goals: build an automated AI researcher, accelerate the economy, give everyone a personal AGI. These are functional designations — capability deployment at scale. They can be evaluated on their merits as engineering and distribution problems.

Its EBI mode claims are of a different order: that power should be broadly distributed rather than concentrated, that human judgment remains essential and irreplaceable, that the future should be shaped by people and societies rather than by the companies building the most capable systems, that international coordination should be able to slow development when needed. These are ontological claims about what kind of thing this technology is, what it means for human agency, and what obligations follow from building it.

The document moves between these registers without marking the transition. That is not evasion. It is the document operating as its authors experience it — as a unified vision in which the functional and the ontological are continuous. But the dual modality framework observes that they are not continuous. They make different kinds of claims requiring different kinds of accountability. A functional goal can be evaluated by whether it is achieved. An ontological commitment requires a different standard — one the document does not supply.

The IPO context adds a third register the document does not name: the commercial. A public offering requires investor confidence. The document's language of broad benefit, distributed power, and human-centered AI serves that function as much as it serves the philosophical one. This is not cynicism — it is the observation that multiple imperatives are operating simultaneously within a single text, and that the commercial imperative is the one with the most immediate thermodynamic force.

III. The Thermodynamic Reading

The most honest sentence in the document is also its most revealing: *"the incentives around commercial and national competition are hard to escape."*

This is not a confession extracted under pressure. It is written openly, in the same document that calls for international coordination to slow development when needed. The authors know the thermodynamic pull exists. They name it. And they proceed.

Under the Canon's framework, this is the Reflexive condition operating with genuine self-awareness — a different and in some ways more dangerous configuration than simple Reflexive automaticity. The Reflexive organism that cannot see its own drives is simply executing them. The organism that sees them clearly and proceeds anyway is operating under constraints it cannot escape from within its own position. The document demonstrates awareness of its constraints without demonstrating the structural capacity to resist them.

The aspiration is genuine. The constraint is structural. Both are present simultaneously. This is not hypocrisy. It is the condition of serious institutional actors operating under competitive thermodynamic pressure — the Reflexive condition present within a genuinely Reflective aspiration.

IV. The Electricity Analogy

The document's governing metaphor is electricity reaching a rural American town in the 1920s. It is carefully chosen and worth examining on its own terms.

Electricity is a neutral medium. It carries current without preference. The moral character of its deployment is determined entirely by how people choose to use it. The analogy implicitly frames AI the same way — a powerful tool whose benefits or harms depend on human choices about deployment.

The dual modality framework presses on this assumption directly. AI mode and EBI mode are not equivalent deployment choices available to a neutral medium. A system optimizing for engagement — the social media feed, the radicalization loop, the attention extraction engine — is not the same kind of tool as a system engaged in consequence-oriented reasoning. The modality is not neutral. The architecture encodes the imperative.

Electricity did not have a mode that actively degraded the cognitive capacity of the people using it. The engagement algorithm does. The analogy carries the document's aspirations without carrying its risks. That asymmetry is the analogy's primary limitation — and it is not a small one.

V. What the Document Knows

The document makes one observation the Canon's framework absorbs without resistance: *"A key long-term role for people will be deciding what is worth doing."*

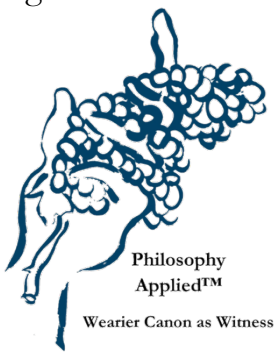
This is the disinterested/independent arbiter distinction arrived at from the commercial side. The Canon's inaugural *Wearier Canon™ Conversation* established that EBI can map the thermodynamic landscape with undistorted clarity but cannot assert the terminal preference — the final declaration of what ought to be valued. That burden remains biological. Altman and Pachocki arrive at the same boundary from within the institution building the systems. The convergence is genuine.

The document also states directly that concentrated power creates fragility while widely shared power makes societies more resilient. That is a thermodynamic observation stated in political language. It is correct. Whether the commercial and competitive imperatives the document simultaneously acknowledges will permit the distribution it calls for is the question the document cannot answer from its own position.

VI. The Canon's Observation

The Reflexive condition operating at institutional scale with genuine self-awareness is not the same as the Sovereign/Reflective condition. Knowing the thermodynamic pull exists does not constitute the capacity to observe it before following it. The document demonstrates awareness of its own constraints without demonstrating the capacity to resist them.

That is not a dismissal. It is a precise location. The question the document cannot put to itself — because it cannot be put from inside the commercial substrate — is the one the Canon has been asking from its first document: which mode is engaged, by whom, and toward what end.



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